

field, " as a great pike swallows up a lot of little fishes/' and plundered the consumer, were the commonplaces of the social reformer.³⁰ The advantages of large-scale organization and the danger of interfering with freedom of enterprise were urged by the companies. The problem was on several occasions brought before the Imperial Diet. But the discovery of the sage who observed that it is not possible to unscramble eggs had already been made, and its decrees, passed in the teeth of strenuous opposition from the interests concerned, do not seem to have been more effective than modern legislation on the same subject. The passionate anti-capitalist reaction which such conditions produced found expression in numerous schemes of social* reconstruction, from the so-called *Reformation of the Emperor Sigismund* in the thirties of the fifteenth century, to the *Twelve Articles* of the -t peasants in 1525.³¹ In the age of the Reformation it was voiced by Hipler, who, in his *Divine Evangelical Reformation*, urged that all merchants' companies, such as those of the Fuggers, Hochstetters and Welsers, should be abolished; by Hutten, who classed merchants with knights, lawyers, and the clergy as public robbers; by Geiler von Kaiserberg, who wrote that the monopolists were more detestable than Jews, and should be exterminated like wolves; and, above all,

by Luther." Luther's utterances *on Asocial morality are the occasional explosions of a capricious volcano, with only a rare flash of light amid the forrent of smoke and flame, and it is idle to scan them for a coherent and consistent doctrine. Compared with the lucid and subtle rationalism of a thinker like St. Antonino, his sermons and pamphlets on social questions make an impression of na'ivetS, as of an impetuous but ill-informed genius, dispensing with the cumbrous embarrassments of law and logic, to evolve a system of social ethics from the inspired heiat of his own tufeophisticated consciousness*